

Session 147
Va'etchanan – Hear Oh Israel!
30 July 2023

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JL9ZavsnpOc>

Ari

Shalom everybody! It is good to see you all again. Brett, who is that next to you? I don't want to put you on the spot! That was so wrong of me just to put you on the spot like that! Whatever it is, I hope things are going well. Hope things are going well. Shalom everybody, good to see all of your faces. This is fun. Actually I just finished right now. You know I try not to ever schedule things on the day of the Fellowship cause I really want to be able to immerse myself in the Fellowship and in the learning. But today was supposed to be the day that Jeremy was leading. Anyways, it was crazy, HaShem's in charge. But I just said goodbye to a group that came out to the Farm called...what was it called? You know our friend Steve Wearp? You know he started Blessed Buy Israel? So it's this group of people that are coming to Israel to mourn alongside the Jewish people on the 9th of Av. And you know, they get a lot of flak, I know they do. A lot of Jews are skeptical and cynical and you can understand it. They think like, "Why are you imitating Jews and whatever you want to do and you want to convert us." And like they're paranoid about it and to a certain degree I can really understand where they're coming from. Because when I originally heard about it, I had a little bit of the momentary reaction the same way as well. But having gotten to know them...and really the longer I'm living out here in Judea, and having moments like Divine-gift moments where I feel like the energy of redemption that I experience. The little moments of that, it makes sense. It makes sense what these holy people are doing. They're coming here and they're mourning the destruction of the Temple because they are paying for it just as much as we are. All of humanity is paying the price for the brokenness and the grief and the sadness for the destruction of the Temple. It's not a Jewish Temple. My House is a House of Prayer for all people and for all nations.

And you know, where a lot of my Arab neighbors, a lot of them are praying for my death and my destruction, I'm praying for the building of the Temple so that their eyes open up to the fact that we're brothers. And we could actually love each other and all of humanity will realize that we are all brothers and sisters. And I think that we'll all just let out one massive, big cry and say, "How could we have done this to ourselves? How could we have hated each other so much? Over nothingness, over silliness and stupidity?"

And so I understand where they were coming from. And it was really special for me to be able to bless them and to thank them for what they're doing. Because there's no question that these people that are coming here and dedicating so much time and effort and energy, mourning for the destruction of the Temple on the 9th of Av, which is such an aberrant, unique thing to do, that they pay a price. You know, socially, at least socially with their families and their friends. A price that I'm sure many of you here...I'm just looking at your faces. I know so many of your

stories and so many bits of so many of your journeys. And I know what you've gone through and what they've gone through. And just being associated with it all. Mike Isley, that's you there, good to see you, Mike! Anyways, I just know what you've all been through, you know. And so it's just such an honor to call you my friends and really my teachers.

Anyways, I really enjoyed the last Fellowship. I want to tell you that. I really wasn't sure that it was going to come together for me. Often I'm not sure the Fellowship's going to come together at all, but what we talked about has really been strengthening me all week, in a real way. So for me, that's a sign that it's a good Fellowship, if it affects MY heart, and it affects me. So for me, that's a Fellowship that's successful. I don't know if you feel that sometimes during the week, that you tap into the Fellowship that we just had before, but I think it may have been one of my favorite Fellowships ever.

And really more than anything, it was because of the Fellowship Connection we had at the end. I know some of you had to log off and couldn't be on, but I know that we had 120, 130 screens. And I know a lot of these screens are not just individuals and their families and some of them are even communities that are coming together to watch together which is a really great thing. And in the Fellowship Connection, the questions were great, and that you were able to answer each other's question. I remember! Someone asked me a question, I answered the best I could. And then someone raised their hand and said, "Could I try to answer it?" I said, "Please." And their answer I thought was actually better than my answer! And so that was cool. And we were able to answer each other's questions and get into a dialogue with each other. That's what made it so special, it became a dialogue, you know a discussion. And I can say that at least for me, I want more of that, I want more of that. It's like a little bit of a teaser, like a taster, a preview of what's going to happen when we're all able to come together here in Judea and spend not an hour together, but a few days together, weeks together, months together, years together, who knows what God has in store? Really.

But one of the things from that dialogue that I wanted to share with you that really stuck with me, and I want to share it with you because of the way it all came out. I don't know, it just sort of tickled me in the right way. It was the part where we were discussing...I don't even remember...something about what it means to make HaShem jealous. How God could be jealous. And I threw out there an analogy that I think that I made up. Not there on the spot, but I think that I made it up. I think it's a rare "Ari original." And it was an analogy about a father that takes his young son to the amusement farm, just wanting to connect and build a relationship. What does any parent want when bringing his kid to the amusement park? And he wins a teddy bear for the son. And from that moment on, everything that the father does for the son, every ride he takes him on, every prize he wins for the son, all the little boy does is he thanks the teddy bear. He hugs the teddy bear, he kisses the teddy bear, he talks to the teddy bear, totally ignoring his dad.

And this started making his father angry and jealous. All he wants is a relationship with his son, a connection with his little boy. Instead of giving him the love that he deserves, the son is giving all of that love and attention to the teddy bear. So, you know I feel like I'm a little bit more bold since the start of this Fellowship. I don't know if I would have been so bold to have create analogy and Chasidic tales about teddy bears and amusement parks to try to convey deeper truths about the nature of God. But whatever, I'm just doing my best here. And it makes sense to me. And so, you know, the question is, was the father really jealous of the teddy bear? No! It's the relationship that he isn't getting with his son. That instead, this silly stuffed animal's getting it. That's what's breaking his heart.

And then, Oak...are you here Oak? He chimed in. And he said something like, "That sounds like a thing now. It's a phrase – like put down the teddy bear, put down the teddy bear." And those words sort of echoed in my head and there were a number of times this week, codified by Oak, where I was distracted by silliness. Ari, you know, HaShem wants a relationship with me right now. Do I really need to be playing with this teddy bear, whatever the teddy bear is at the moment, whether it's my cell phone or whatever it is?

And so there we were, learning together, growing together, and playing off of each other. To me, that's what the Fellowship is really about. And so, we have a lot to talk about on this Fellowship. There's just so much. You know this Torah portion, Va'etchanan, it starts off with Moshe Rabbenu, Moses our teacher, it's one of the most heart-breaking moments in the Torah. You know, he's just standing right over there...literally I can see with my eyes right now out the window, in the mountains of Moab. And he's begging HaShem, literally throwing himself at HaShem's mercy, va'etchanan. There's ten different words used for prayer and each one has a different connotation and meaning to it. And this, va'etchanan is like begging HaShem, throwing himself at HaShem's mercy. You'd think that he would say, "I'm Moses. You know, look at all I've done my whole life. If anyone deserves it, it's me!"

But no, he was not saying that. He was literally saying through his prayer, va'etchanan, I don't deserve this at all. I don't deserve it. I'm just begging you, please, please, HaShem, let me enter the Land of Israel. For reasons that we can speculate about, but ultimately, ultimately we don't understand. The answer was no. The answer was no.

One of the answers I like to give here at the Farm is that you know, people say, "Are you American?" And when they just arrive at the Farm and they hear my English, I guess. And I say, "I'm definitely not American. I was born in America, but only because of the destruction of the Temple and the exile of the Jewish people around the world. And Jews are like...Ok! No, but the truth is, Christians are intrigued by that often. But the truth is that one of the commentaries that's given is that Moses was not able to enter the Land of Israel because when the daughters of Jethro introduced him to their father, Jethro, Yitro, as Egyptian, they said he's an Egyptian, he didn't correct them. He didn't say, "I'm not an Egyptian. I'm a Jew, I'm an

Israelite.” He didn’t say that. And he should have said that. And so he got his identity. Ok, so you think you’re an Egyptian? That’s why you’re not going to be able to enter the Land of Israel. Take it or leave it. These are all commentaries of different things they’re trying to teach you. I think by now we understand that we don’t need to believe necessarily every element of that to still learn from the message that the sages are trying to share.

But anyways, he wasn’t allowed to enter the Land, and the portion goes on to become one of the most comprehensive Torah portions in the entire Torah. In my opinion. There’s not like an official rabbinical stance on that, but that’s how I feel. And what do I mean by that? I mean, that if someone came to me and said, “Ari, give me one portion that I should study that will teach me the main messages of the Torah.” I really think that I would pick this portion. This is the one in my very humble and quite possibly flawed perspective by the way. This portion, it’s just like the greatest hits of all times, if such a thing were possible. The reason I’m saying this is because you know, very often, when I try to do a Fellowship chronologically from the very first verse in the portion, and I just try to go in a linear fashion, I end up not making it far past the very first verse in the whole portion because there’s just so much to explore, just on that one word. Look, we’re already a quarter through the Fellowship and I haven’t even started it yet! What is wrong with me? Please forgive me!

Anyways, so I don’t want that to happen this Fellowship. I couldn’t afford to take that risk, so I just did it in a little bit different way. I sort of skipped ahead to a few of the main issues. But before I even try to tackle and dive in, allow me to introduce Jeremy. Now Jeremy isn’t actually near the internet right now. His father, thank God, has lived until, in a healthy way...a remarkable, remarkable man. You should meet Amnon Gimpel. He’s a remarkable, great man, truly. And he’s 80 years old and Jeremy went with his family to celebrate his father’s birthday. And I think there was a misunderstanding about the schedule, so here I am. So he wasn’t able to be here or use the internet, but he did just send this message. So here is Jeremy’s message to us for this Fellowship. Jeremy, shalom!

Jeremy

Shalom, Fellowship. I hope everything is going well with all of you. I’m sorry I’m not able to make it live today. But as the Fellowship is live, I am celebrating with all of my family in the Land of Israel, my father’s 80th birthday. And so that’s a big deal. And in honor of my father, I want to give over the Torah of this week. This week it starts off with this one word – Va’etchanan, and Moses prayed. But in Hebrew, va’etchanan means “and I prayed,” specifically with the aleph in the beginning. And maybe right there is the key. Tehila taught me this over Shabbat. It’s like the one time where Moses isn’t given what he asks. So many times he prays on behalf of Israel, God hears him, the greatest prophet of the time and here he asks just to go into the Land of Israel. And he’s told no.

The midrash really goes into it. The midrash says that Moses says, “You know what? Turn me into an animal. I’ll give up life as a human. I just want to walk into the Land. Make me into some sort of cow, make me a goat. I just want to walk in the Land of Israel.” God says, “No.” “Make me a bird. I just want to fly. I just want to fly over the Holy Land.” God says, “No.” “Make me a fish. I’ll just swim right up to the banks of the holy Land. Be right on the sands of the shore.” And then God says, “No.” It’s like why is God saying no here? What’s all this about?

And I think that the answer lies in the word, va’etchanan, and I prayed because why was he left alone? I mean, why weren’t ALL of the Jewish people praying for Moses to enter into the Land of Israel? I think I heard Ephraim Goldberg say it’s almost like a Tehillim WhatsApp group. Alright, we got to pray together. Come on guys. Join the WhatsApp group. And he’s alone in the WhatsApp Tehillim group. And he’s there, praying for himself. And the Jewish people don’t pray with him. And the midrash says that had the Jewish people all come together, had they prayed together with Moshe, God would have said yes. But the fact that Moshe was left alone in his own prayers, it says it’s just not meant to be, he’s not meant to be the leader that brings them into the Land of Israel.

And so, what a beautiful thing that our Fellowship is, that all of us start the Fellowship with a prayer together. We all come from around the world from different backgrounds and different cultures. And just praying for the welfare of Israel, praying for the welfare of the Jewish people, praying for the forces of good to overcome the forces of evil. And our strength is in our unity. And you know, in this week’s portion we talk about the Shema. And you know it’s so powerful every morning and every night. It says you should love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your might. And we’ve talked a lot about that. Meod – the last word doesn’t mean might. Meod means “very.” To love God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all of your very. It’s really to love God with everything you have. And I don’t think that’s telling us how to love God. It’s not telling us, “Well, if you love, then love like this and love like that, and love with your heart, and love also with your mind.” I think it’s actually defining for us what love is. To love something really, is to love it with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your might. That’s what love is. And Moses is saying, “I love the Land of Israel so much, I’ll give it all. I’ll be an animal, I’ll be a bird, I’ll be a fish. Whatever I need to be, I just love the Land.”

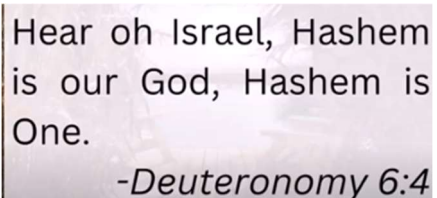
And so, what do we learn from these two things juxtaposed to each other. So many of us, we have things that we love, but we sort of hold ourselves back. And we don’t prioritize those things properly in our own lives. And it’s like we have been given such a gift in the things that we love. Things that we love that exist in our lives? Don’t ever take them for granted. Love them with everything that we have. If it’s your father’s 80th birthday, if it’s your anniversary that’s coming up, if it’s your child’s birthday, there’s just so much good if we just open up our eyes to see it. And it’s to love what we love, and to not hold back.

And so, this Fellowship, we should all be blessed to love with all our heart, with all our soul, and with all our might and to know that in this generation, what Moses couldn't accomplish with all of his prayers, we have the opportunity of being in the Land of Israel, of visiting in the Land of Israel, of moving to the Land of Israel. Just get on the next plane. It's available to us now. And so, we should really love with all our hearts, with all our soul and all our might. Alright my friends, I will see you again next week. Shalom!

Ari

Very nice. That's true, you know, sometimes I struggle with that. That question. I don't know if you have this also but there's certain fundamentals of Torah and understanding God. But sometimes it all fits into place and I see it clearly and it's so basic. And then, other times I read the same thing and like, "You shall love the Lord your God," and I'm like, "How can I be told to love...how can I be dictated an emotion?" Didn't I do a Fellowship about this and now it's all blank and gone and what? And help me understand...it's something that we have to constantly, constantly revisit. You know, it's almost like we're in the middle of a dark forest in the middle of a crazy storm, a rain storm and we're trying to get to some house on the mountain-top somewhere, you don't see anything. And then there's a lightning. Lightning strikes and you see for a moment that house and then it's gone. It's like, what is it, where is it, that's sort of our journey through this world. You know, and I think that we come to this Fellowship among other things that we do, in hopes that we'll have those moments of lightning striking here, for that clarity that we can take with us.

Ok, but anyways, our portion is talking about that first verse phenomenon, you know where you get stuck on the first verse. But this portion was so critical to me that that doesn't happen. Because the most central ideas, to take a deep dive into this portion, to swim through these waters, you see that there's really at the heart of it, there are six words, that if you look at those six words, you unpack everything else. Not only in the portion, but in the entire Torah. So who can guess, Fellowship...I'm looking at the chats here. What are these six all-encompassing, fundamental, foundational words which I want to start with for this Fellowship? I'm looking at the chats. There we go. Tom! You got it, Cathy, Laura, we got it. That's right, that's right. Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad.



Hear oh Israel, Hashem
is our God, Hashem is
One.
-Deuteronomy 6:4

That's right. Those are the six words that I want to TRY to unpack here. I know it's very ambitious and it's been such a crazy thing that I know I'm not going to do justice to it. But even doing slight, minimal justice to it is already a good thing. I guess I'm just trying to comfort myself.

But I'll speak for myself when I say that my whole life is revolving around this verse. Not just me, but many, many, many people for many generations for thousands of years, but I'll just talk about me. When I wake up in the morning, I wake up at some ungodly hour that starts most of

the time with a 5, sometimes a 4. And I wash my hands, I get dressed, and I run to morning prayers. The heart of which in those morning prayers is the Shema, right? The Shema, through the Amidah, through the Shemoneh Esrei Meditation. But really, the Shema is the heart of it. And when we get to the Shema, what do we do? You know what we do. We cover our eyes. Some people actually, it's like a kabbalistic idea, they take their thumb and their pinky and they put it right here in the groove of their eyes. They close their eyes and they put the three fingers right here which makes a shin. A shin for Shema. I just do it like this because that's the way I've always done it. And I close my eyes.

But all these things, it doesn't create mystical things. It's like when you do this and say the Shema it helps to focus your intent and your thoughts and your mind and your heart. It's not like it does some sort of mystical thing. But anyways, let me get back on track here. So we cover our eyes. And why do we do that? And why do we cover our eyes? We don't want to get lost in the very compelling and convincing illusions of this world. Of the mask that HaShem so brilliantly put on this world that gives off the impression of multiplicity and duality in the world. That there's more than one power in the world. That there's many different powers, many different things. So we cover our eyes so that moment when we say the Shema, when we say those words, that we ourselves don't get lost in that. Our ears are hearing the words our mouths are saying. Hear Oh Israel, we're hearing the words our mouths are saying. I actually just thought of that, I don't know if there's something to that, but it makes sense to me. We're hearing it from ourselves. We're reminding ourselves.

When we recite the part in the first two paragraphs about the tefillin that we should have as a sign on our arms...a sign between our eyes and our arms. We kiss the tefillin on our arms, then we kiss the tefillin that is positioned on our forehead, above and between the eyes. The part of Shema that talks about that. Then we gather the tzit-tzit from the four corners of our garment, of our tzit—tzit, and we kiss them and we say the word tzit-tzit. So we're constantly interacting with these commandments of the tefillim and the tzit-tzit that are encompassing us, that we're wearing, we're totally immersed in it. You know, there are many people actually who wear the tefillin and the phylacteries all day long. But you have to be really functioning at a pretty high level of not getting distracted by the mundane nonsense of this world to pull that off. I definitely am not there, but living here in Judea, I'm grateful to say that I have friends who are there.

So first thing in the morning I recite the Shema, and I try to live my day in consonance, with that truth of God's dominion and orchestration of the world that the Shema represents. And I try to live this life of faith and trust and happiness that's a reflection of the knowledge of God's unity and His Oneness. And then after a long, sweaty day, I return home and right after dinner, I run off to evening prayers, where again the heart of the entire prayer is the recitation of the Shema. And even when I return home from the evening prayer, the Shema is still on my lips as I often go straight into Dvash's room, straight into her room to put her to bed, which is one of my favorite

highlights of the whole day. And again, the first thing I do when I walk into her room...give her a hug, and a kiss, and then we sing Hamalach Hagoel (https://www.zemirotdatabase.org/view_song.php?id=26), the words of Jacob that says the angels who redeemed me shall guard the lads, it's a beautiful song that we sing. And then the heart of the entire thing is that we recite the Shema together. I recite the Shema with Dvash before she falls asleep. I recite the Shema with her just as my parents did with me when they put me to sleep, and just as their parents did when they put them to sleep, and their parents did, all the way back quite possibly to Mt. Sinai, itself. And I mean that! And by the way, this is not like a partisan, sectoral, demographic thing that certain Jews do this and certain Jews don't. If there's anything that brings all of the nation of Jews together, every single Jew, it doesn't matter if it's Ashkenaz, or Sephard, or Judah Mizrach, or whatever, everybody, it's the Shema. It's the Shema that has kept us alive for thousands of years. That central mantra for the entire nation of Israel.

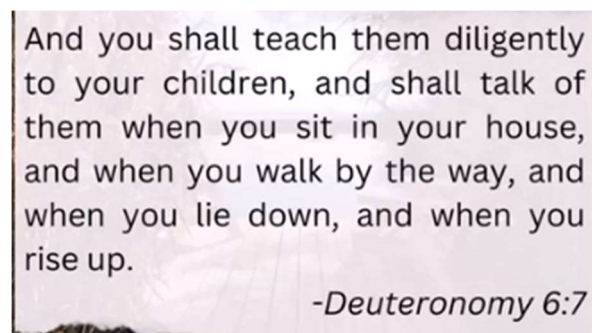
Some of you actually may have heard this beautiful story. Possibly even from me, about the famous Rabbi Yitzchak Halevi Herzog (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ExZf1Y6Csbc>) who in 1946 left Israel, just after the Holocaust and went to Europe. And he was visiting these various monasteries, you know the few righteous monasteries who agreed to take in Jewish children whose parents sent them there to these monasteries and hoped that they would survive. And so Rabbi Herzog turned to Rev Mother of one of these largest monasteries, and when he arrived there he thanked her and he blessed her and the monastery for endangering themselves in hiding these Jewish children. And he requested that the monastery turn over the children to him so he could bring them back to the Land of Israel so that they could be raised by their people, by their nation, by their families. Not by their actual literal families. In almost every case their families had been murdered, but to go back to their people.

And the story goes that the Reverend Mother said that she was more than willing to turn the children over to the Rabbi, but she said that they couldn't keep records, and by this point, they already didn't know who was who and there was no way that they could definitely tell who were the Jewish kids and who were not the Jewish kids, particularly being that most of the children, themselves, didn't know. Because they were little toddlers, babies and infants at the time that they were sent there. Because remember this story? So Rabbi Herzog assured the Rev Mother that he would know, that he'd be able to tell. Then the children were gathered into a large hall, and they were all congregated in one place. The Rabbi cried out in a loud voice, "Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad." He bellowed out, "Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One." And immediately dozens of children from the hundreds of children there, thousands of children, dozens of children rushed up to the rabbi shouting, "Mama, pappa, mommy, tati..." They're calling for the parents with tears filling their eyes and rolling down their cheeks. Many of the them were sobbing uncontrollably. They probably didn't remember much in their heads and their brains. But those memories of their parents singing

the Shema to them before they went to sleep, well that's not a memory in the head, that's a memory in the heart. That's a memory burned into the soul of the nation of Israel.

So why...why was the Shema chosen as this mantra, this ultimate legacy? Why was the Shema chosen as the central truth? There's a lot of other possibilities there. Why was that the one that was chosen to pass down to your children and your children's children? Why that? So there are many reasons. And I didn't ask Tabitha if we could do the Fellowship Connection. So if you can't it's ok, but if we can, I would love to hear the thoughts that you may have about why this is the case. Your thoughts about Shema, I would love to do that.

You know, but before we get into some of the reasons that I just want to throw out, quick background for those that don't know. There are three paragraphs in the Shema prayer. We start off by saying the Shema, that sentence chapter 6, verse 4 of the book of Deuteronomy. And then it goes right into the first paragraph. And then the second paragraph is chapter 11 of Deuteronomy. And then the third is from the 15th chapter of the book of Bemidbar, which is Numbers, am I correct? I think it's Numbers. I always get confused in English translation of the Hebrew books. Ok, so the first two of these three paragraphs that compose the Shema each clearly express the fundamental directive of teaching the Torah. But more literally, actually teaching the Shema itself to your children. Let's look, Deuteronomy chapter 6, verse 7:



And by the way, I really try to do this. Every single one of those I try to when I'm with Dvash to talk about the Shema, to talk about HaShem, to talk about the Torah to my children. And interestingly enough, someone by the name of Ellie Pink, I don't know who he is, but I read something he wrote. He pointed out an important distinction between those two

paragraphs, the first two paragraphs.

The first paragraph, it first states there to teach your children – that whole bit about teaching your children, only then does it say to bind them upon your arms as tefillin, as tefillim, as phylacteries. And the second paragraph reverses the order, curiously, interestingly. It reverses the order and it first says to bind them as tefillin and only afterwards it says to teach them to your children. And he says that the reason is because the first paragraph, where it first says, teach your children, it's conveying that this commandment of teaching the Shema to your children is effective the moment they are born. The moment they take their first breath, which of course is the reason why the very first words that I whispered into both Dvash's ears and Shiloh's ears when they were born, the moment they were put into my arms, the first breath that came out of my mouth into their ears was Shema Yisrael, Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad. The minute they entered the world, it's incumbent upon us to continue in this multi-

generational mission of implanting this beautiful truth into their hearts. The moment they're born! Long before they become thinking adults and start putting on tefillin. And you know, at least for Shiloh, bizrat HaShem, way before the intellectual process of knowing anything, they're already learning the Shema and it's entering their hearts.

The sages actually teach us that the commandment to offer our first fruits to HaShem, the laws of bikkurim is also like an illusion, an allegory that we must devote our first fruits, right? Our children, our children's lives, even their first years, their first moments to HaShem. And ensuring that they know the beauty of the Torah and the holy truth of the Shema. That's the first moment, that's the first moment until their last moment. The last words I said when my father left this world was, I put my hand over his eyes and I whispered the Shema into his ear, as I pray that Shiloh will do to me when I leave the world. First words we encounter and the last words that we say and the last words that we hear.

But ok, so back to the point that we were learning. So we're taught that the second paragraph, where tefillin is mentioned first, before the directive to educate your children is so we know that even AFTER they've matured into adults and start wearing tefillin, even then when they're grown-ups...no we can't say, ok, our job is over. No. We are no less obligated to continue their Torah education.

So a man brought a teaching from one of the Lubavitcher rebbes, Rav Sholom DovBer of Lubavitch. And he said...and when a Lubavitcher rebbe says a thing, that's like a law. At least to the Lubavitcher, really to the nation, just as it is incumbent upon every Jew to put on tefillin every day, so too it is an unequivocal duty on every individual from the greatest scholar to the most simple of folk, to set aside a half hour each day in which to think about the education of their children. Every day, to think about the education of your children. That is how critical and central and fundamental that that is.

I'll never forget, we were having a goodbye session with one of these groups of these German volunteers that came out to the Farm, and everyone was sharing something new that they learned, that they didn't know before. And one woman said something I'll never forget. She said, "You know I've never seen anyone love their children the way all of you love your children." You know, it was so unexpected, it just had such an impact on me. I'll never forget that. And I was sort of without words for a moment. Now listen, I am sure that this woman loved her children with all of her heart. You could tell that she was a God-fearing, Bible-believing woman. She was definitely a terrific mother. I'm sure that's true, but I think she was sensing that there's just something else, something perhaps intangible in the nation of Israel. An added thing that is just built into the genetic make-up of the DNA of the lineage of Israel in which we're taught by HaShem that our most important legacy in this world is the love and the effort that we put into our children.

And by the way, I want to open up a parenthesis here. I can do this, I know I'm ADD, but the spirit is moving me, I want to share this with you. I want to say these words because one of the most frequent themes of your messages to me, when you're seeking advice, or to share your hearts, is that you're often, I find that many of you are often pained, often distraught about how you feel that your children are going off the path that you have educated for them, that you want for them. If it's not too personal, raise a hand if this speaks to you at all. Right? There's a lot of us, there's a lot. And it's not just you. In the nation of Israel, in the Land of Israel, around the world, this is something that is very common.

So here I want to say that you can never say that they're off the path. Because you don't know their path. You don't know. Do you remember the story of the righteous King Hezekiah who didn't want to have children because he knew through prophecy that his son would be this evil king Manasseh? The evil, evil, evil, one of the most evil kings in the world in the history of the nation of Israel was going to be the son of this righteous King Hezekiah. His name's Manasseh. And so he didn't want to have children. But to cut the story short, we could just open up to the whole portion and get into that. But it was a sin that he did not want to have children. Because it was not up to his understanding. It wasn't his place. Because follow the Davidic dynasty down, dynasty further and further down to Manasseh. Ok, Manasseh was a bad guy, bad guy. True. But what about his son? And his son? All the way down to the Messiah that we've been praying for.

No prayers for your children are unheard. No effort is ever in vain. It is not our place to be disappointed. It's only our place to love our children with all of our hearts, to pray for them, and to model for them what it looks like to love HaShem, and the happiness and the goodness that brings to our lives. To love them unconditionally, despite them knowing how you believe and that they know that they're maybe disappointing you, and you just shower them with so much love and so much pride, no matter who they are and they can feel that unconditional love that HaShem has for all of us. And that's really what we're here to do. And it can't be fake, it has to be real. It's real. This is a tough generation. Just the very survival of our children and with all that they're facing is an onslaught. We should be overwhelmingly proud of them.

And so, anyway, so I think this German woman picked up on this sort of overarching priority, the emotional investment and the central purpose that our children have in our lives, I think. I think. Anyways, so I want to let you in on a little struggle that's happening in my family right now. You know, actually over the past few months since my father passed away, we've been going through this. It's not a bad struggle, it's a thing. I think probably a lot of families go through it. And so, my mother, my sisters, and I, we've spent a number of months deliberating about what to write on my father's matsevah, on his tombstone. It's a decision that people have to make for their family, for their close ones. And we've gone through many ideas and we're just waiting until we're all happy. Thank God we're not fighting about it, we're just trying to figure it out together. And we figure like until we are all at peace and we're all happy, it's not

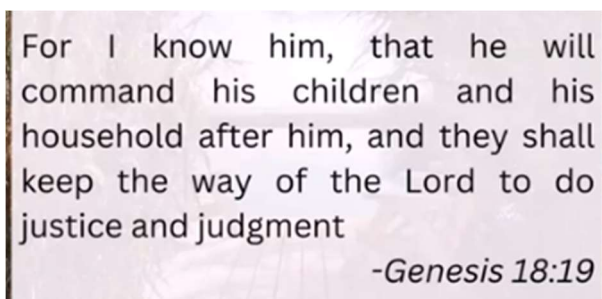
the right thing. And so, we'll know when it's the right thing. We'll know it's from HaShem when we all say, "Ah, it's right." And so, we all agreed immediately that it would definitely have the words – a lover of Zion and Jerusalem. Those are the words on his father's tombstone and his grandfather's tombstone as well. You can actually see, I found a picture of my great grandfather's tombstone. You see that right here:



It's a pretty impressive tombstone there! It says there, Lover of Zion and Jerusalem. And I have zero doubt that it goes much further back than that. So that's making the cut. It's just been on so many generations and it describes like our family and the mission and the message that has been successfully and centrally transmitted that we all feel like that is an accurate description and summation of our entire essence. What a blessing, right?

But it feels like it's a big decision. You know? It feels like a literally a monumental decision, and it feels very final, and a lot of emotion goes into it, just making this consequential decision. And so, here's my thing. Being that my father's name is Mordecai, I wanted to put the verse – And Mordecai did not bend the knee or bow. It's a verse from the book of Esther, which is clearly a reference to when everybody was bowing down to Haman and Mordecai refused to bow down. And I liked that verse because I felt like it summarized my father's holy obstinance and his willingness to pay any price rather than to bend the knee to what everybody else seemed to be bowing down to, whatever the thing was. And my sisters liked it and my mother liked it, but they didn't LOVE it. You know, they didn't really want it on there. It just didn't speak to them in that deep way that it needed to.

So something wasn't right there, and it was only last week, maybe two weeks ago that it hit me. And you know, the whole Mordecai thing was an element of my father's character without a doubt, but I just knew that the verse that hit me last week...I just knew they would love it. And it's from chapter 18 of the book of Genesis of Bereishit, when HaShem is describing His special love for Abraham.



That was my father's essence. His children. Teaching us and inspiring us and modeling for us how to walk in HaShem's ways, how to love Israel, how to love the Jewish people, how to love Zion and Yerushalyim. That was literally all that mattered to him, all that mattered to him!

You know there was a time a few years where he was actually doing pretty well, and he told me that the office manager said, “Michael according to what you’re making you should be driving an Lexus or a BMW, and he just bought a pickup truck. And he said with the rest of that money, he gave that to the Jewish Day School, not for our tuition, but for the tuition of other kids that didn’t have the ability to pay tuition. He would rather drive around a pickup truck, by the way which he really loved more than he would have loved any of that nonsense. Because no Jews had pickup trucks for some reason. And they all needed to borrow them, and he used to make them say, “You’re right, a pickup truck is cool.” And so he loved it it’s great. I totally understand where he’s coming from. But the point is, that he was paying all these other tuitions. He would do anything, go without anything to make sure that we received the Jewish education that he never got.

And I was right. The minute I shared that with my siblings and my mother it was unanimous. For some reason, there’s a little something holding it up, I’m not sure exactly what. But everybody liked that verse and felt like it captured the essence of my father. And that’s why God said that he loved Abraham in a special way. What was it that Abraham did? That’s what Abraham was all about. And our last name, thank God is Abramowitz, son of Abraham. Anyways, I don’t know. I’m getting lost on the personal thing.

But let’s take a step back to the beginning. All right, let’s go back to that central six words. Six words that change everything, right? Shema Yisrael HaShem Eloheinu, HaShem Echad. Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. The first word is, Shema, listen. It’s usually translated as hear, right? Hear Oh Israel. But I actually think that listen would be a better word because you know you can hear something, Shaena says like, “Are you listening to me?” And I could just sort of parrot back to her the last eight words or six words of what she said. She’s like, “Just because you can recall the last words doesn’t mean you’re actually LISTENING to me.” Right? You can hear something and not internalize it and not take it to heart and not even understand it at all. But when you listen, it enters, it makes an impression.

In the past we’ve talked about the fact that the words of God on Mt. Sinai had no echo. They didn’t bounce off anything. They were absorbed and integrated into all of reality and into the hearts of everyone that was there. They didn’t bounce off anything. Because in the Torah, hearing is really of paramount importance. Actually, this is interestingly enough, Jewish law. Torah law teaches that one who is responsible for making someone else blind is obligated to financially compensate the person who they’ve wounded, who they made blind for the value of their eye or their eyes.

But someone who made someone else deaf, they need to compensate that person for the complete value of their entire life. After all, you know I suppose, I guess the reason is that your eyes can deceive you, right? But what you hear has really a more profound sense of truth to it. You know the interesting thing, the Torah tells us in Exodus, chapter 20, verse 5, that when the

nation is at Mt. Sinai, they SAW the sounds. They saw the sounds. That which they would normally only hear, they were able to experience with their sense of vision as well. They saw the sounds.

So the Shema is priming us to hear, it's priming us to listen. Very much in the same way that Jacob, Yisrael, his children gathered around him on his deathbed, and they were telling their father to listen to them. They said, "Hear Oh Israel, listen to us father." As they spoke to his heart and they reassured him. What did they say to him? Shema, Hear Oh Israel, that was the Israel we're talking about. The Lord our God, the Lord is One. They were assuring him, reassuring him that HaShem was their God and they understood the secrets. They understood the secrets. The secret that has been entrusted with the nation of Israel and empowered the nation of Israel for all these years.

Now as you all know, to really unpack and magnify this verse of Shema and what it's essentially saying would take an entire fellowship. I know that because I'm pretty sure we've done it before. I believe we've done a whole Fellowship just on the Shema before. But in its essence, the verses conveying the truth that HaShem...you know the Name Yud, Hey, Vav, Hey, the tetragrammaton, you know what I'm talking about? The ultimate name of HaShem? That name is the most transcendent encapsulation of HaShem's foundational attribute of compassion. That's the source name, the root name, that we know that the most transcendent, compassionate God, we know that. That's what we're saying in the Shema is Eloheinu, is also the imminent God, is the same God that manifests behind every other energy and every other power in the world. All of the plagues of Egypt that they made, the laws of the forces of nature that the Egyptians made into God that they worshipped? We understood that all of those are just different manifestations of the unity of HaShem and He's in charge and controlling all of them. They don't have their own independent power and force.

And it sounds ridiculous to us, right? But back in the day people believed that, and really I think today a lot of people essentially believe that, too. And so, that's what the message of the Shema is. Eloheinu, all of these different forces, we know the secret that HaShem is behind all of them, animating all of them as different and as disparate as they may seem. Meaning that HaShem, the transcendent God is the only God. He's the God behind every imminent force that we experience in the world. That's essentially the same message that has been echoed throughout all of Jewish history.

The example that am to mind for some reason, the most notably, is with Elijah the prophet. Who else thought of Elijah? When he told the nation of Israel, "Are you fools?" Because the nation of Israel at the time, remember they were praying to Ba'al, and they were also praying to the God of Israel. "How long can you stand on both sides of the fence?" If you believe in HaShem really, then definitionally, you cannot believe in any other God. Definitionally, you cannot believe in HaShem and Ba'al, you can't believe in HaShem and Nachushtan, you can't

believe in HaShem and Asherah, or the sun god, or anything else. The moment you believe in HaShem, as Elijah said, there's nothing else. HaShem Elohim, God, HaShem Yud Hey Vav Hey, IS the imminent forces and powers that are all around us in this world from man to the forces of nature to everything that seems like it has power, that is HaShem. HaShem is behind all of it. HaShem is the power behind every imminent energy and imminent power in the world. Ok, if I'm saying it again and again, it's because we say it again and again, and it's important to drill this in.

And so back to the Shema. Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. Hear Oh Israel, Israel, right? It's not some abstract, disconnected, universal thing, no matter how much leftist, liberal Jews and Reformed synagogues in America want to universalize everything. This understanding of HaShem in the world is entrusted to Israel and entrusted to the Jewish people. It's a fire, it's a torch that we are supposed to give to all the nations of the world. That's a knowledge and understanding we're supposed to implant in the hearts of everyone. But it's given to us for safe keeping to share that message. And so it's personal. You know we have this personal special relationship with HaShem. He runs the whole world, but we have a special thing going on with it, right?

Hear Oh Israel, the Lord, Eloheinu, HaShem Eloheinu means OUR God, not HaShem Elohim, HaShem Eloheinu. We are a people, we're a nation, we're a family, this is personal. And we're connected to each other by being HaShem's first-born people. He is ours and we are His. And He is with us all of the time. He's ours and we are His in our happiness and even more so in our grief and in our pain.

So Shema Yisrael HaShem Eloheinu, HaShem Echad is one. Is one. Just as HaShem is one, not that there is one God, but HaShem is one. Who knows the difference between those two statements? There being one God, as opposed to two, three, four, zero. We're saying HaShem is one. He is Oneness. And just as HaShem is one, we His people are also one. And our love for each other, and our unity is a testimony to that truth. And that's why it's such a desecration of God's Name when the world sees division among the nation of Israel. For how are we supposed to bring unity to the nations of the world when we ourselves do not have unity amongst ourselves? That's part of the great tragedy that we're all mourning on the 9th of Av is the hatred that brought about the destruction of the Temple. Because the Temple was a mockery as long as the nation of Israel...here we are offering sacrifices of the nations of the world saying there's one God, and we're hating each other? It's a mockery, it's a hypocrisy.

Ok, so we're running out of time, so let's go on into the first paragraph of the Shema. Let's just go through the whole first paragraph there. Let's read it as a whole and then we'll go back to the beginning which will probably take us to the end of the Fellowship, ok?

And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.
And these words, which I command you this day, shall be in your heart;
And you shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise up.
And you shall bind them for a sign upon your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.
And you shall write them upon the posts of your house, and on your gates.

-Deuteronomy 6:5-9

There you see it, right?
What was the first message? Love HaShem.
Two - teach your children.
Three – tefillin. Wear it on your body, right? On your arm, on your mind, like you integrate it into your knowledge, then bring it into your hearts and into your actions. So tefillin, wear it on your body and

on your body, on your heart and in your mind. Mezuzah, wear it on your homes, in your heart, in your children's heart, on your body, in your homes, everywhere. Totally encompassed and immersed in this truth, always as we go through this difficult, challenging, confusing world. That's the first paragraph.

Now let's go to the beginning. What does it mean to love HaShem? So Jeremy shared some thoughts which truly are beautiful, right? Everything you have? That's what it is to love, everything. I don't know. I don't know, I think that there's degrees of love. It's not just all or nothing. But there's definitely something to what he said. You know we've done entire Fellowships about what it means to love Hashem. And I actually want to go back and relearn those. But like the question, how can we be commanded to have an emotion? That is a fair question to have. Love God, how do you tell me to feel a thing? But I'll just tell you the simplest way I understand that when that question comes up for me is that the word love is ahava, is what we've talked about before. The root word of ahava comes from ahav, which means to give. And so when you love someone, you give to them. And so, by loving HaShem with every bit of our essence, we are not only willing, but we do. We give HaShem everything that we have and everything that we are, right?

So let's go to the first words again. We shall love HaShem with all of our hearts. Now here's the case where you really need to know the Hebrew for the next part of this. Because if it was just about loving HaShem with all of our heart, it would say for those Hebrew people, you could confirm what I'm saying here it would say, "With all of your heart," but it doesn't say, "libecha," singular, it says "levavecha," with all of your "hearts." Meaning, it's plural. It's plural. Why would it be plural? Well, we have numerous hearts, so the Chasidic sages, not only them, even Rashi himself, you know they teach the truth that I think is actually sort of clear and obvious upon independent reflection, just the nature of life and humanity. So they note that the human being is a merging, is a synthesis of the transcendent, lofty holiness of the soul which is a spark of HaShem, Himself. And a much, much lower manifestation of that light in the form of the animal body. We have a lot of things in common with an animal. The lusts, the cravings, the

desires, we have an animal body too. So it's like we have two hearts – an animal heart and a spiritual godly heart. And each one of these energies, it's got its own heart. And that's why Rashe says, "What does it mean, levavecha? That we are to love Hashem with both of our inclinations." Right? We're not like monks that are just banishing or like a priest that just banishes the whole physical side of things, just act like it doesn't happen. Ignore it, push it out, that doesn't work. It creates perversions, it creates sicknesses.

It says that we're supposed to love Hashem with both of our inclinations – the lofty spiritual inclination and the base physical inclination. Both of them. We don't deny the physical, animalistic thing. We elevate it. And although it seems like the two hearts are pulling us in opposite directions, it doesn't need to be that way. The truth is, they both come from the same source, obviously. They both come from HaShem. They're both from HaShem, and they're both critical for us in order for us to fulfill the mission that HaShem sent us down into this world, into this physical body, in order to fulfill. We need them both to fulfill that mission. And a critical part of that mission is to channel and to direct and to elevate the animal desires, the animal hearts, to sanctify that and elevate it.

And so, when I was thinking about how to explain this, my mind took me in a little bit of an ADD direction, but we're all family here, so I'm just gonna roll with it. It took me to my youth. And you may remember when I was a kid, I did a lot of crazy things. Maybe it had like holy reasons that I did them in my own mind, but I did a lot of crazy things. And nothing criminal, nothing like bad, nothing that hurt anyone. Just crazy. And it was a lot, it was a lot. My parents had to endure a lot. I was actually quite well known for my antics. People seemed to respect me for it sometimes, I felt like it made me popular. Just all the time I was doing it, I'd do something as silly and ridiculous...this is just the example that came to me, it's not a great example. I would go up to a window of a restaurant where there is a table and let's say 20 people that were eating inside by the restaurant. And I would just go up to that window and stare, stand up straight, flush to the window with my face against the glass, staring, fixated on their table, at their food, never looked away for a second, no eye contact, no smiles. I would just rub my belly and lick my lips like I was starving and just focus on their food for like a long, uncomfortable, I mean like seven or eight minutes. It's a long time, right? Not cracking a smile, it was like a gift. You know, and my friends would be like...you know the people at the table didn't know what to do with themselves. They would go through all these...trying to ignore and then going back to trying to just looking at the food. And my friends were cracking up at a distance. And that's just one silly, relatively unentertaining example. It was silly, but you know I was a kid, so I don't like judge myself too harshly for it.

But there was some time there that I really thought of going that route. You know, it's really like the Sasha Baron Cohen, I was really good at making people laugh, and I was good at keeping a straight face. I thought may be stand-up or something else. I didn't know, but I never did it. Because whenever I did things like that, the older I got, it felt more empty. I felt like there was a

lot of laughs and a lot of positive attention, but there's no real light or beauty coming out of it. It was just...it just became at a certain point, crazy for crazy sake.

And then Jeremy and I, you know we started our TV show, we were already on this mission of sharing about HaShem and Israel with the world, feeling like I was like an advocate for HaShem in the world. And so we had the radio show, and then remember we had the TV show. And it was the first time that I really felt like those skills that HaShem gave me to do ridiculous things and make people laugh, that I could actually harness what I thought was just solely a base, low impulse, and I could harness it for HaShem and for godliness in the form of our television show called Tuesday Night Live in Jerusalem, particularly the segment called Meet the Streets. Now for some reason I just found out that none of our old Tuesday Night lives are online. I don't think, I couldn't find them neither could Tabitha. We couldn't find the Meet the Street segment. She just found one that someone else put up. But I wanted to share it with you. It's not the best one, but it was just one just to give you a little taste of how I was able to harness those impulses for something that I felt was light. And so Tabitha, do you want to play that?



What I'm going to name my first-born son, Dudu and my daughter's, Moron and Osnat. Because they're not going to leave the Land of Israel and go to live in America with a name like that, no? There's beauty in that...

Ok, so that's not a great example, I'll give you that, not a great example. But that's just what we found. And keep in mind the audience there was predominantly Jews in Israel, and so there's certain names in Israel like Osnat and Dudu which are like normal names here. But if you take them to America, it'd be pretty embarrassing to say that your name is Doodoo, at least where I'm from. Anyway, so I thought that was funny. And we had a lot of laughs and a lot of things and I really felt like I was able to harness what like I said was a base impulse to serve HaShem.

We do that with our sexual desires. Those could go off the rail into horrible places. Or it could bring the most holiness and the greatest, sweetest life into the world if we just harness it. Not deny it, but channel it. If we allow our higher self to control it and to have our soul be a vessel and a vehicle to channel it. Anyways, that's what we're called upon here in this world to do. To elevate, to elevate the physical by sanctifying it for the spiritual realm.

And so we love HaShem with all of our hearts, bachol nafshacha, with all of our souls. What does that mean to love God with all of your souls? Meaning we need to be prepared to die, to sanctify HaShem's Name. I always think about the holy Roi Klein, he was like a sage, a scholar, a soldier, a hero. One of the greatest heroes in my mind in modern Israeli history. He was in the Lebanon war and his grenade was thrown right amongst his...they were in some sort of little house...right in the middle of his whole unit. And he jumped onto the grenade and saved the lives of so many of them as he declared Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad, the last words on his lips as he left the world, saving his fellow soldiers.

I just think of the countless Jews in history that have preferred death than to bow down to an idol or to renounce HaShem, each one with the Shema on their lips. So we have to be willing to sacrifice our lives or sometimes by the way, even more difficult – our egos. We have to be willing to sacrifice our egos for HaShem. We have to be willing to stand alone and to look like a fool in the eyes of the whole world, for our whole lives. That's better than appearing like a fool in the eyes of HaShem for one second. It's easier said than done. But we have to be willing to sacrifice our ego, b'chol nafshacha. And then v'chol meodecha, which some people define as all of our money or all of our possessions. Jeremy says something I love, with all of our meod. The word meod means all of our very's. With the very best of everything we have. Because ultimately, you know when we sacrifice all that we have and all that we are, the illusion of our separateness is stripped away and we're able to merge and connect with HaShem in a way that is the greatest joy and pleasure in the world. In a way that words can't describe it. It is not something that can be conveyed intellectually. You just have to experience that for a moment. What it is to sacrifice something real and something that means a lot to you for HaShem, you'd think it would be so painful, but it's the greatest in the world.

So when you pierce through the outer shell of any of the words of Shema, the paragraphs, you see that it's all there to just convey the deepest truth, right? Ain ode milvado, which as you know, is one of my top all-time favorites. Every body that's been here knows Ari – Ain ode milvado, there's nothing other than HaShem. Which quite intentionally by the way, is in this week's Torah portion as well, chapter 4, verse 35. There's nothing other than HaShem. HaShem is the ultimate Oneness.

I actually thought of an analogy, and I wasn't going to put it in but it kept on jumping into my mind again and again and again. I'm like, ok, so maybe I'm supposed to put it in, even though it seems silly and trite. Are any of you, now or were you ever Trekkie's? Do you know what a

Trekkie is? Star Trek? Ezra! Ezra was a Trekkie, Ezra is a Trekkie possibly. Anyways, my father loved Star Trek. We watched Star Trek together all the time and he would always talk about the Holodeck. And the Holodeck, you know, they would step into this room which is just a room and then when you press the button, this sort of unified energy field would generate whatever environment or entities they wanted. And it seemed so real, it was like a whole world. But it was really an illusion. And eventually the Holodeck shut off and it just whoosh...it was all gone. It was all from the same energy field.

But it just felt...that's what...it speaks to me. It's a little bit of a decent analogy to what is HaShem's Unified Oneness. We look around us and it's so compelling, but really it's HaShem who's behind everything. Everything conveys this unity of HaShem, all the way down to the number of times we repeat Shema in a day. When do we do it? In the morning and at night. It makes me think of the verse from the book of Psalms. We speak of your chesed, in the morning. What is the chesed? Clear, obvious, revealed loving kindness. We talk about that in the morning, in the morning when there's light and everything is clear and illuminated.

But then it says, we testify to our faith in HaShem at night, at night in the dark. Not just literally like the chronological night, but the nights of our lives. In the dark during the times of confusion and doubts. And for that same reason, we pronounce the truth of HaShem in the Shema both in the morning and at night.

So I'm going to try to bring this together because I see we're over time here. There's something very unique about this way. It actually shows up in the Torah itself. You know, you won't see this in any Bible that you read. Even the Jewish JPS you don't see it. You actually have to look at it in an actual Torah itself, in a Torah scroll to see what I'm talking about. I got a picture of it. I want to share with you, but it's actually a relatively rare phenomenon. But there are two letters in that verse of Shema that are dramatically larger than the other letters in the Shema.



There are two larger letters. So the first one is the letter ayin which is from the last letter of the word Shema, ayin. And the second letter, is a dalet. From the last letter of the word one. And so when you put those two letters together, they spell "ed," which means witness. And I think that the message is clear. The Shema itself is a testimony to the secret of God's Oneness, to His perfect unity. And we are the nation of the

Shema, as Isaiah says in chapter 10, adi, we are HaShem's witnesses. That's what we are. And just as HaShem is unified, so are we. Whether we realize it or not. So when we the nation of Israel proclaim Shema Yisrael HaShem Elokeinu, HaShem Echad, we are testifying to the Oneness of HaShem. And just as HaShem is eternal, we as His witnesses, we're eternal as well. One God in the world, that one idea of the One God, such a novel idea introduced by the nation of Israel can only be truly testified to by a unified nation. Not a uniform nation, a unified nation,

a unified nation. And that's for two very different things. It's very easy to be unified when you're uniform, but that's a totalitarian dictatorship that the left wants and America around the world. That's not true unity. What true unity is, that the greater the diversity is within that love and that unity, the more beautiful the unity becomes. Because the unity is only facilitated, it's only allowed, it's only able to come into being because of the knowledge that we have. That behind all of these distinctions and differences between us, HaShem is there, He's all of our Father.

And so, I want to share with you this video actually that was filmed this past Thursday in Rome. Now as you're watching this, let this sink in. Right? These Jews are at the Arch of Titus, and on the Arch of Titus is carved the images of the Romans returning with Temple vessels, and Jews subjugated and in chains. Where are the Babylonians now? Where are the Romans? Where are the Byzantines? Where are the Assyrians? Where are they? Gone. They're disappeared. Great Empires are gone, gone. And this stubborn, stiff-necked nation of believers in the one God of Israel, we are still here, arm in arm on the 9th of Av, singing the Psalms of King David in ROME at the Arch of Titus. If we forget you, oh Jerusalem, may my right arm lose its cunning. Listen to this.



How can you not be touched by that? Unbelievable, unbelievable, it's like a redemptive vision. If only the nation of Israel, those Jews being carried off in chains and their Roman captors would have been able to watch that video and see who would be there and who would be gone. But it's not because of our might or our strength or anything about our cunning or our anything. We exist and we survive despite our insanity as a people. Despite ourselves, not because of ourselves, despite ourselves. Because HaShem loves us ultimately and truly, His unconditional love for us, we don't really understand. We can't really understand it fully, but it's there. And by extension, that love will go to all of humanity and all of the entire world.

And so, that's why I think it was a worthwhile thing for us to focus here in this Fellowship just on that verse of the Shema. Because that is, it's the deepest secret of the unimaginable Oneness and unity of God. It's all in those words. And as the nation of Israel along with those who love us and attach themselves to us, our mission is to be a living testimony to the Living God of Israel, a living testimony to the Eternal Rock of Israel.

And the day will soon come when the eyes of all the nations will be cast upon us and instead of quoting the United Nations Resolution 242 or some ridiculousness, we will stand in front of the entire nations of the world, all of the nations, and we'll pronounce with confidence and with

clarity and with faith – Shema Yisrael Adonai Eloheinu, Adonai Echad. Hear Oh Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is One. May that day come very soon.

And so now my friends, it's my great honor to bless all of you with the blessing of Aaron the High Priest that he gave to the nation of Israel. And as you know, I am not a priest, I'm not a descendant of Aaron, but I am from the tribes of Israel. I think Judah, but that's just obviously because I just think that. But that's what the Torah tells us. HaShem tells us we're a nation of priests. And it our greatest privilege to bless the entire world. And blessing all of you is my greatest joy because you are a blessing to me beyond what you could ever know.

Aaronic blessing (Hebrew)

May God bless and protect you, may He shine His light and His countenance upon you. And may He give you peace. Amen.